Not Quite Right

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INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past two years of the MFA Program, I have become freer and more experimental in my working process. This has led to a greater degree of experimentation with ways to configure the different components I make in my studio. I have also begun to work more with found materials, altering and transforming them to meet my ideas. As I reflect on my exploration, process, and studio work, I find, more often than not, the parts that work to create the whole can come together in completely different orientations depending on the space in which they are shown. Therefore, my installations are continually changing. I've learned that things being "not quite right" can lead me fruitfully in new directions and break down barriers and rules I may have had in my own art-making practice. This has been liberating, and I know will inform how I continue to work.

My current area of exploration questions how objects and materials can come together to create fences or barriers. I am attempting to address ideas of boundaries, divisions, and borders, and how areas and spaces are defined. I am interested in how we build them around ourselves, physically and emotionally, as a method of delineation and defence. Through considerations of boundaries the work expands to explore notions of the everyday, materiality and process.

A fence, for example, is built with a specific purpose: either to keep things in or to keep things out. Boundaries are sculptural in that you can build them up and manipulate them in whatever way is best suited to your purpose. A wall can be a solid structure for defence or more delicately constructed for privacy. A fence can be solid, transparent or decorative. As such, a boundary can be considered in the same manner as American art critic Rosalind Krauss describes a sculpture: "functionally placeless and largely self-referential"[1].

I am also intrigued by ideas of transparency and permeability within the construction of boundaries and how variances in materials and process can bring about these qualities within my work. The intersection of the tangible and the intangible creates something of substance, yet it is undermined by continual flux. By attempting to materialize the interstitial, I look to challenge my understanding of boundedness[2], while provoking a reconsideration of the space between objects and ideas as an erupting site of transformation.

Initially, when I began the MFA program, I explored physical barriers in space, in particular walls and fences. I then considered objects that mark a certain area, considering both parking curbs and jersey barriers as a means to explore how we delineate space. I used these structures as starting points to reflect on what types of defences we tend to physically create to define a boundary between interior and exterior spaces and subsequently how we define, or create, personal space. However, about a year ago, the work led me in a different direction as I began to focus on a specific space: the property surrounding my grandparents' farm.

I grew up in the hayfield next door to my grandparents in rural Nova Scotia; I spent my time running through the fields, helping with the hay, cleaning up after the cattle and learning to

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[1] Krauss, Rosalind, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", (Cambridge, MA. MIT Press, October, Vol.8, Spring, 1979), 34

[2] the quality or state of being bounded (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/boundedness)

knit and bake. The chores, tasks and even the games we played while growing up there gave me a sense of a day-to-day rhythm and repetition that kept the farm functioning and everyone fed. After taking time to consider this space, and looking back on my childhood experiences, I feel it has deeply informed my art practice by fostering handed-down ways of making that carry through into the way in which I now work. The farm is now changing significantly, as a highway is currently being twinned through the property. My parents' house will be sitting on six lanes of traffic and my grandparents' house will be gone. In response to this change, I started to contemplate this area of land, starting with the fence line along the back pasture. The fence line seemed like a natural starting point as I have been considering delineation of space through the construction of fences. In this instance the fence is representative of how the space was delineated for decades prior to the construction.

In the following sections I will discuss the evolution of the artworks that I have included in my MFA exhibition, *Not Quite Right*. The title of the show comes directly from the process of writing and speaking about my work. I have used this phrase repeatedly to describe the pieces themselves or what was happening in my studio. The individual pieces acquired a sort of mimicry; they were identifiable, but upon closer inspection an aspect of each work was 'not quite right'. I have divided the essay into smaller sections or "musings" to discuss how the pieces in the show have come about rather than approaching the work chronologically. This has allowed me to consider the works individually by comparing them to pieces that were 'not quite right' for the exhibition as a whole, and to situate the works that are included in the exhibition within a larger context. I have also chosen to add small sections or "side notes" regarding pieces that I chose not to include in the show; to me they were unresolved, but interesting as evidence of ideas, processes, and peripheral sketches that reveal my attempts, sometimes without success, to get things 'right'.

MUSINGS ON: the beginnings

I began to consider fences as a delineation of space during my undergraduate studies. Early in my exploration of ways in which we delineate public space versus private space I chose to work with the sculptural process of casting. The object I cast was a plaster representation of a concrete (cinder) block, a basic unit of contemporary construction. The process of making multiple units was repetitive and familiar. I could create smaller things that came together to make a whole which could then become a dividing wall which marked an interior and an exterior. The blocks were an easily identifiable object with strong formal qualities and appeared very minimal in their outward appearance and material use. The cast block mimicked or imitated the true object at a distance. Upon closer inspection there was something not quite right; the blocks were a passable understudy but not exactly true to form. This was a direct result of my process and the materials I chose. The plywood molds I used for casting left a wood grain texture across the surface of the blocks, while the addition of sawdust to the plaster caused the blocks to age, turning slightly yellow with time.

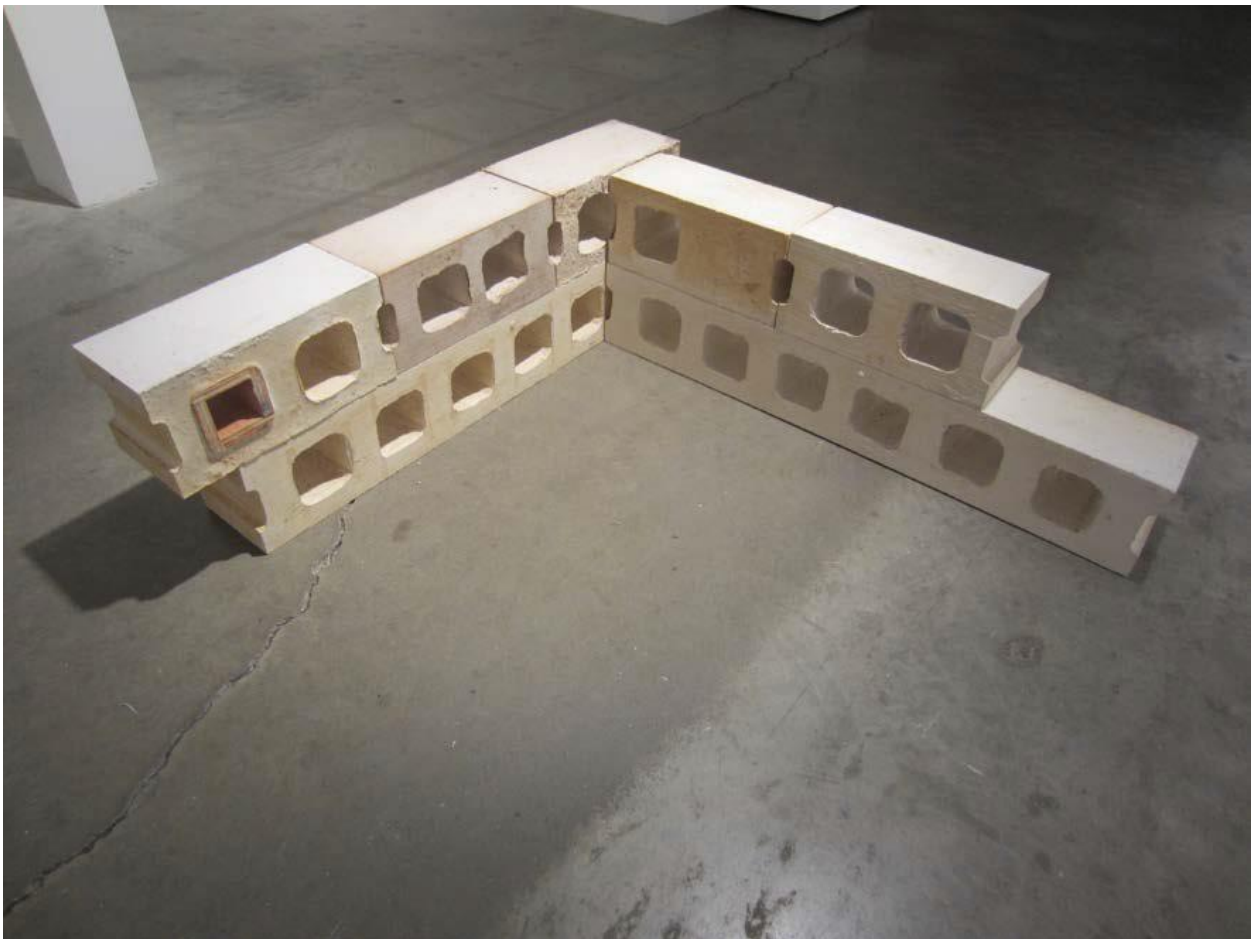

Figure 1.Diana Chisholm, *Rudimentary Fabrication,* 2011.

This early work reflects my affinity with a post-minimalist aesthetic. American artist, Eva Hesse, functions as an important intermediary between post-minimal art and the work of contemporary artists and my own practice. Hesse was considered to be post-minimalist due to her reaction against the sleek, industrial, manufactured surfaces and the inward-looking references promoted by minimalists artist prior to this time. Her response was to make work from delicate, ephemeral materials such as wax and latex rubber. Thin layers of wax and latex added an element of translucency to the work and created layers that were emphasized by the lighting in the exhibition space. Hesse's choice of materials was not conducive to longevity, thus much of the work has been effected through material degradation over time. For me, this material degradation creates a sense of permeability and impermanence. In Hesse's case, these materials carried emotional qualities and could allude to things outside themselves, in opposition to earlier minimalist approaches.

Figure 2. Eva Hesse, *Repetition Nineteen III*, 1968.

In the emerging post-minimal period, many artists and critics began to shift focus and move away from strictly formal qualities and placed new emphasis on the processes by which a work was made rather than the finished object. Movements such as 'Anti-Object' and 'Arte Povera' emerged. Arte Povera turned towards the "accidental, the contingent, and the hand-made"[3] wherein "neither the materials used nor the way of assembling them follow established hierarchies"[4]. Art and everyday objects collided in the work that was produced during this time.

This shift was very important to me in terms of art and art production. My work is highly dependent on process, on time spent working, considering a work first one way and then another, until the ideas I am trying to present start to emerge in an intentional way. Process is as important to me as a finished product. The roots of the process and material choices I make are connected to growing up in rural Nova Scotia. Times spent on the farm carrying out repetitive chores and going to work with my dad in gravel pits and around heavy construction equipment are personal experiences reflected in my artwork. I am most comfortable and do my best thinking in a quiet manner, be it crocheting at home or working in a metal or wood shop. I gravitate towards functional or construction materials rather than the precious metals or stone historically associated with sculptural traditions.

[3] Causey, Andrew, Sculpture Since 1945, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 145.
[4] Ibid., 145

I have found that by emphasizing process and material in my work, it is possible to expand on ideas by presenting aspects of the ordinary or overlooked aspects of everyday life/space. This allows for multiple points of entrance and interpretation of the work. The post-minimal period of art production interests me because it expanded on ideas of conceptual art by considering the possibility that the final object was not of sole importance. I responded to the focus on 'dematerialization' which, in some cases, included works that dissipated over time, or were torn down and demolished, existing solely through photographic images that documented evidence of their existence. Artists like Gordon Matta-Clark were creating works that transformed everyday objects in relation to their surroundings (in his case, a house; see *Splitting*, 1974). In the case of *Splitting*, he split a house down the center, cutting through rafters, walls, and floorboards before shifting the foundation to emphasize the split. Many of the buildings Matta-Clark worked on were slated for demolition; for him, their conceptual importance was as a deconstruction of architecture rather than the construction of an object.

Figure 3. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, 1974.

MUSINGS ON: *blocked in and wrapped up*

In the past two years of the MFA program, I have been attempting to connect the ideas and forms I am working with to the everyday. I have become increasingly fascinated with buildings that have areas where the material consistency of the surface is slightly shifted, imprinted with the outline of windows and doors of the past, filled in or blocked up like a ghost of the architectural element that once was. Once points of access between private and public space, these surfaces have become a defence against any suggestion of what is behind them. When I moved to Saskatchewan to begin graduate studies, I continued to work with my previous box molds to cast a simulation of a cinder block, now casting flat rectangular forms to the standard dimensions of cinder blocks. I began by building a shallow space using standard 2x4 lumber and plywood to construct an eight-foot wall that was about two feet deep. Along the surface of the wall, I laid out a pattern for the blocks that would create a façade, and left a central space that was to imply a blocked up window. I then filled in the blocked up window space by rubbing powdered graphite onto the plywood surface. The dark interior 'window' appeared uninhabited and reflective of abandoned buildings with boarded over windows. This wasn't my intention, as I wanted to imply that the space behind the physical barrier was a representation of personal space: a space that would always be inhabited.

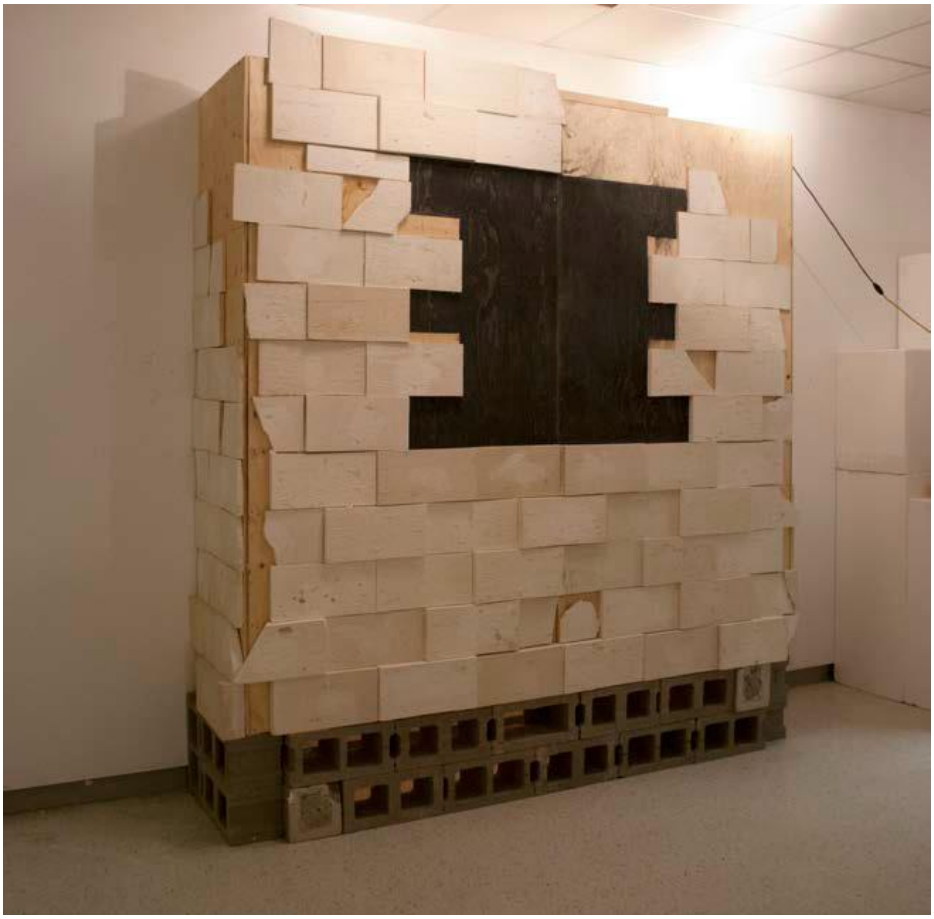

Figure 4. Diana Chisholm, *untitled*, 2014.

In an attempt to rework the piece, I added a foundation of concrete cinder blocks, stacked non-traditionally with the holes in each block facing outwards. The addition allowed me to add light to the interior of the piece with the hope that the light would imply an inhabited space. The small bank of windows provided by the cinder blocks created a permeable surface but one would have had to crouch close to the floor in order to see into the interior.

The progression of this piece connected me, again, to the work of Eva Hesse. Her way of working was experimental, allowing her to become familiar with the properties of her materials and shifting and stretching her interactions with them so that, in the end, her work took on an ephemeral quality. Her process in the studio was progressive in that she was continually creating tests and models that informed the next piece. In a work such as S-168 (1969) we can see how the layers of latex, cheesecloth and wood create a sense of translucency and tactility that informed a work such as *Contingent* (1969)[5]. In both of these instances the pieces are suspended and have a formal quality, which, when paired with the lighting, present an aspect of airiness. In comparison to the wall I constructed, Hesse's works seem to me much more successful by her use of both hard and soft surfaces and the harmonic relationship of the materials, rather than the disparate materials and harsh edges that were emerging in my wall.


Figure 5 & 6. Eva Hesse, S-168, 1969; Eva Hesse, *Contingent*, 1969

I was dissatisfied with what I now refer to as "the wall." Rather than continually reworking the piece that I seemed to be struggling with (or against), I reconsidered the original idea. I wanted to retain the metaphorical idea that you only allow so much access to your personal space, so I built rectangular structures that might be read as windows, doors or shutters.

[5] Fer, Briony, Eva Hesse: Studiowork,(Yale University, 2009) 176.

Once these frames were created, I wanted to maintain ideas of transparency and permeability while at the same time not allowing complete access to what was behind the surface of the works. I disassembled scavenged wooden pallets, and used the slats to block the surface of the rectangular openings. The slats were not meticulously placed; instead, I intuitively placed the slats, allowing my process to dictate how close or how separated the slats were. This process allowed for imperfections in the wood and changes created through the deconstruction process to provide slight access to the interior. I am referring to these pieces as *blocked in*; they achieved the ideas of permeability and transparency that I had struggled to articulate in "the wall".

Figure 7. Diana Chisholm, *blocked in and wrapped up* (installation view), 2015

To further heighten the quality of transparency, I added vapor barrier, a construction material, to the surface of the frames, wrapping it in repeated layers until the surface became soft and spongy with an increased opacity. This second experimental phase had less reference to windows and doors; I refer to these as *wrapped up*.

A third approach that I experimented with was to combine the two previous surface treatments, pairing the vapor barrier with the wooden slats and stretching it across the surface of the wood. I emphasized the jagged edges of the slats by adding clear packing tape. These pieces seemed to become more personal and to reference bodies, the vapor barrier becoming a type of protective wrap along the surface.

For the installation of both *blocked in and wrapped up*, I added light to suggest the presence of something beyond or within the objects. I didn't want these to appear as vacant

structures so I back-lit the wooden pieces and lit the wrapped pieces on the surface to allow for reflection and a degree of ambiguity as to their substance.

All of these pieces, in combination, provided the answer to what I was looking for in "the wall". The forms became less static as the light flowed across and through the materials rather than seeming to struggle or compete with them as it had in "the wall". In this series, the materials dictated the direction in which the work needed to go. The wooden slat pieces seem to imply a less solid boundary, with only one layer between the interior and the exterior. They are somewhat permeable with the light highlighting the element of transparency between the boards. When I added the initial layer of vapor barrier it was highly transparent and not an overly strong material; however, it did increase the sense of a barrier or membrane. When I layered my materials in this way, transparency and permeability decreased significantly, and the objects became bodies as well as architecture, increasing the sense of protection and defence.

SIDE NOTE: parking curbs

As I was considering various aspects of my research interests I began to notice everyday objects that delineate a specific space. As I walked to and from the studio, I cut across a parking lot which was partitioned with parking curbs that appeared to be asphalt. I began to work with the parking curbs, casting them with plaster bandage, first in the parking lot and then in my studio. Upon attempting to release the curb from the mold I discovered that the material was not asphalt at all. The parking curbs were composed of recycled tires that had been broken down into various sizes of crumb and brought back together in an industrial molding process to create the new form. As opposed to the rigid structure that would have resulted from asphalt, the curbs were flexible. I was intrigued.

Figure 8. Diana Chisholm, work in progress (parking curbs), 2015.

I have worked with the parking curbs in a variety of ways. I first cast them in plaster bandage and then moved to using the curbs themselves. I have made fences with the curbs by sliding them over rebar, stacked them over each other and on the floor, and played with the malleability of them by leaning them against walls. I don't think I have figured out yet what they are exactly. But they are connected to what I have been working on in that they are a barrier. The curbs were my first departure from the casting process in the last four years and they have opened up the way in which I work. They have opened my process to greater experimentation and led me to choose materials to suit my work, as opposed to forcing an idea into a preconceived method of making.

A satisfying aspect of working with the curbs is that in each installation I have been drilling holes into them and bits of rubber crumb have scattered across the floor. The curbs are thus becoming more permeable with each installation and I have been saving the crumb. In working with them in this way they will eventually cease to exist. As with Eva Hesse's work, time has become an important factor destroying the longevity of these objects; they have become "objects to be destroyed" (Lee on Gordon Matta-Clark's work)[6]. When I think of the impending highway through my family farm, I suspect the curbs will emerge again as their material mimics asphalt and their function is to provide a barrier.

MUSINGS ON: *chain-link*

Awareness of my particular way of making increased as I explored ideas of delineation of space, boundaries and defence. I noticed a trend in my studio practice towards repetition and taking a multitude of parts to create a whole. In casting multiple repeating elements, there is a push-pull between fabrication and replication which allows for accidental errors to emerge. I prepare and plan, but I also began to notice a certain amount of release from structure, and how chance occurrences began to direct the course of my work. My building and making was shifting away from casting, though some of the core methods of that process remained important to me. I became more aware that my work was as much about making, as it was about the end product.

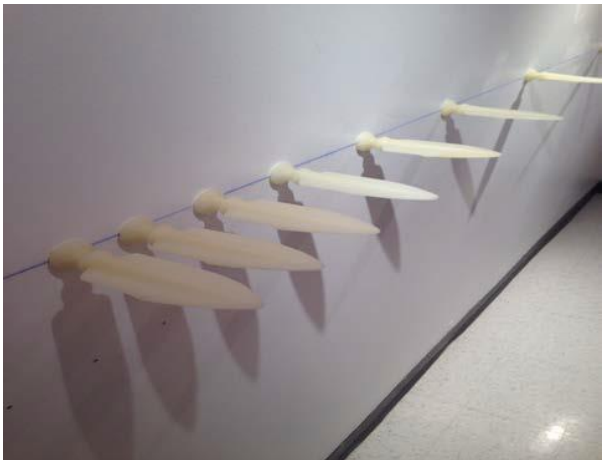

Figure 9. Diana Chisholm, de/fence, 2014

[6] Lee, Pamela M. and Gordon Matta-Clark, Object to be Destroyed :The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

After the struggle of "the wall", which had a heavy and weighted presence indicative of the way in which we physically put up boundaries, I attempted to find a way to express a softer, more metaphorical boundary. I began by casting fence top finials in beeswax, the wax having a skin-like appearance. The original finial was one I was given at a metal shop in rural England and was shaped like a spearhead, a defence in its own right. The wax pieces were then placed along the wall of the gallery pointing outwards as if emerging from the flat surface, the increments of space between each one increasing. The shadows cast downwards suggested fence posts that were nonexistent. The piece was called *de/fence*, a play on words: "de" usually negating the word it is put in front of. The piece allowed me to play with light and shadow in my work in a way I haven't in the past, opening up a lighter more subtle way of working within the exhibition space.

Along with a focus on process I've become increasingly aware of my material choices, noticing that the work is much less of a struggle when fewer materials are involved. The materials became less traditional sculptural materials and shifted into the realm of everyday domestic or construction grade materials. The benefit of this shift for me is that when the materials are less precious, I am more open to experimentation and error. I began to consider my work as part of a cycle of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction.

Although *de/fence* was working in new ways as a softer incarnation of personal space, I wanted to continue to work with a single material in a lighter and much more personal way. Returning again to the fence and its function of keeping things in and out, I began to crochet sections of chain link fence. I used wool in a grey colour that is similar to an actual metal fence, and a single, repetitive crochet stitch. As I worked, I contemplated the constant upkeep of the fence, as well as ideas of mending fences and the old adage that 'good fences make good neighbors.'

Figure 10. Diana Chisholm, *chainlink*, 2014.

My use of crochet introduces aspects of handed-down ways of making and traditional, functional craft work that I learned as a young child from various women in my family: my mother, grandmother, and aunts. Working in this way also meant I moved from the shop to the house, the industrial to the domestic. As I worked on this piece it appeared both blanket-like, stretched across my lap, and also like a fishing net, a functional object in many coastal Nova Scotia communities.

Like the cinder block works, the chain link is mimetic, something that could be read as similar to what we know chain link to look like. Yet the closer you get, the more you realize that something is not quite right. There is a slight colour variance used to break the monotony of the repetition; stretched out under tension, the diamond pattern of a real metal fence is believable but the material lacks rigidity and strength. It could easily be cut apart with scissors; and as a defence, it is not solid. Like the wax spears of *de/fence*, which can be melted down, the chain link fence material could easily be transformed back into the state it was in when the work began with the simple untying of a knot.

SIDE NOTE: jersey barriers

As a shift occurred with the materials and processes in my practice, I took some time to consider an object that created a divide between two spaces: I chose to work with jersey barriers. As an object, the jersey barrier is most visible as a barrier between traffic that is flowing in opposite directions. I became fascinated with the form when used to keep workers, equipment and materials separate from the area surrounding construction sites. Prior to coming to Saskatchewan, I had a desire to cast a jersey barrier but had not committed to the effort for many reasons. I was not interested in using the same materials or method as the cinder block because I would no longer be able to do the casting without assistance and the barriers would not be overly portable due to weight considerations.

An introduction to Tyvek® house wrap as a potential material shifted my interest in these objects in an entirely different direction. Wanting to transform the two-dimensional quality of the material into a three dimensional form, I created a flat pattern in order to piece together a barrier from the Tyvek® material. As with the cinder blocks, I worked with the object on a 1:1 scale. I cut, folded and sealed the seams of the piece in order to create an enclosed object that had the characteristics of a barrier. But without any internal structure, the barrier slumped into a softer form than the concrete barriers with which we are familiar.

I decided to add the element of air. I placed a small valve in one end of the barrier and attached a hose from a compressor and opened the line in order to fill the Tyvek® barrier. It filled quickly, taking on the familiar form and then expanding beyond the standard dimensions, becoming increasingly soft and pillow-like. It was similar to the real thing, but not quite right. I inserted vents to keep a straight-edged form while still allowing the air to fill the piece. This added to the softer appearance. It now billowed out at several points looking like upholstered furniture.

Figure 11. Diana Chisholm, *untitled*, 2014

The addition of air added an engaging performative element to this piece as it was expanding. This aligned it somewhat with inflatable objects such as Christmas yard decorations and bouncy castles and led me to question what exactly I wanted the barrier to be. I began to consider the object in relation to the softer, personal boundary I was trying to achieve. Thinking about it in this manner lead me to consider that this was a barrier that could be embraced; it was soft and comforting, not solid and defensive. For me the barrier took on the role of a body, breathing through each inflation and deflation. This idea was reinforced by a comment from curator Donna Wazonek, who noted in the exhibition catalogue for a show of inflatables that "there is a recurring reference to the fragile nature of our thoughts, bodies and relationships, and of the enclosures we build to protect and shelter ourselves"[7]. Prior to making the jersey barriers I had been considering personal space as something intangible that needed to be represented in a metaphorical manner through the construction of softer representation of boundaries or barriers. Through the construction of the jersey barriers, I became aware that implying the presence a body within the constructed barriers was much more indicative of personal space.

[7] Wawzonek, Donna, "Blown: Seema Goel, Ana Rewakowitcz, Max Streicher and Robert Zingone", (Regina: Dunlop Art Gallery, 2005) 13.

I enjoyed working with new materials in creating the jersey barriers; however, there are remaining technical issues to resolve. I have played with timers to accentuate inflation and deflation but they still do not stay inflated for long and I'm dissatisfied with the distracting noise that occurs during inflation. Nevertheless, the exploration of a new material and the myriad of ways in which it can be manipulated has fostered new ways of constructing objects and offered possibilities for future work.

MUSINGS ON: *fence line*

Last summer I had the opportunity to return to Nova Scotia to visit family. The construction of two bridges made the impending highway even more of a reality. Although I no longer live there, I return often, and I wanted to consider the surrounding landscape before the opportunity is lost. I did this by spending some time contemplating the fence line along the back pasture. Initially, I traversed the length of the fence line, considering how at one time the fence was meticulous, but how, in the absence of farm animals, it had begun to fall slowly into disrepair. It was no longer any sort of defence, keeping nothing beyond its perimeter from entering or anything on the exterior from exiting. The line of delineation was more clearly marked by the tall grass growing around it, as many of the posts had fallen to the ground and had not been replaced.

I began to think about how I could document the fence in order to capture it at this particular moment in time. I marked off a length of the fence line and then staked out a corresponding curve in the field, taking a photo every fifteen feet along the curve with the lens directed at the mid-point along the fence. This focal point stayed stationary while I moved with the camera along an arc through the field. I digitally stitched together the resulting photographs to make a long panorama of the fence line.

Figure 12. Diana Chisholm, *fence line*, 2015.

I then had to consider what I wanted from this piece. I was dissatisfied with placing a flat documentation of the fence line along a wall in an exhibition space. I wanted to incorporate the idea of a fence as a defence along with elements of transparency and permeability. The posts that were fallen were reflective of the permeability of the fence and spoke to the lack of defence it provided. I decided to print the image on a clear film, giving an element of transparency to the photo itself and allowing the viewer to see beyond the image. I decided to display this long, transparent photograph along a similar curve to the arc I walked on taking the images. I hung it from the ceiling on a metal frame at eye level. Utilizing this display mechanism, I hoped to turn the work itself into a barrier within the gallery space – its physical presence encouraging viewers to move around the work.

Suspending the image and displaying it off the wall and on a curve creates an interior and an exterior and challenges the viewer to consider the idea of the function of a fence. It may reveal the ideas of permeability and transparency that I have been considering: a fence as a defence, and alternately, how strong said defence is. The panorama also offers multiple entrances and viewpoints. On the inside you can view the whole image from a single point, which is how you want to view a photograph traditionally. Yet there is an immersive quality to the piece that places the viewer within the space. On the exterior you have to walk along the curve and in a sense follow my footsteps along the fence line.

fence line hovers between sculpture and photography, turning the viewer and the work into a lens that is concave or convex – focused or diffused. The viewer has taken on a key role in this piece, which operates in "landscape mode"[8] with multiple points of reference and no singular focus; in this way it is like the post-minimal art referred to by Morris, who contrasts this multi-focal approach to a more singular, body-based, figurative way of viewing art that preceded the 1960s.

For me, this piece is a way to contemplate a place with which I am very familiar; I think however, it has the ability to be more universal in its interpretation. While specific elements refer to a particular area of Nova Scotia, this image can also be read as a fence line in any agricultural setting. The changes to rural landscapes as infrastructure is developed are happening across the country, and far beyond.

SIDE NOTE: *between what was and what will be*

One of the outcomes of *fence line* was that I was able to consider a specific place in relation to my research interests. By displaying this image on a curve, I was able to construct interior and exterior spaces and situate a viewer in the space I had walked through. I wanted to continue to work with that particular site but to focus more on allowing the viewer to have a sense of being within that space. I had begun to consider my work as being interstitial: situated in a space between two occurrences.

In some instances the work looked like it was either being constructed or disassembled but it was never clear which of the two processes was occurring. In a second photographic panorama, taken when I returned to Nova Scotia in December, I wanted to situate the viewer in

[8] Causey, Andrew, Sculpture Since 1945, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 134.

an interstitial space between the back pasture (what was) and the construction site (what will be). In a sense the viewer is placed within the space that is occupied by my grandparents' home, which is slated to be torn down. I again turned towards the photo in order to create the sense of space. Using the panorama to depict the view in the backyard in opposition to the view in the front yard, I digitally stitched the images and printed them on paper.

Figure 13. Diana Chisholm, *between what was and what will be*, 2015.

This piece connects, for me, to a work by Gordon Matta-Clark called Conical Intersect (1975). In this work, Matta-Clark created a connection between two seventeenth-century buildings by cutting a series of circular holes through the buildings. This created a cone that erupted through the exterior of one building to make the cone visible at street level. The work took place in buildings slated for demolition due to impending construction of a more modern structure. Art historian, Pamela M. Lee, points out, "the Parisian site neatly illustrated the tension between narratives of historical progress"[9]. In this instance the cone created by cutting the holes not only connected the buildings but created a link that directed attention between the architecture of Old Paris (what was) and a continued effort to modernize the city (what will be).

[9] Lee, Pamela M. and Gordon Matta-Clark, Object to be Destroyed :The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) 171.

Figure 14. Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, 1975

I have attempted different installations of *between what was and what will be*. In one version, I positioned the images on walls across from each other in an exhibition space using the space between the photographs as a stand-in for the hayfield. In a second version, I introduced the parking curbs to make a barrier between the two, a speed bump of sorts to the progression of the construction that will be inevitable. I first made a fence by stacking the curbs over rebar stands but it was not quite right so instead I piled the curbs between the images. I drilled holes in the curbs to slide them over the rebar which had an interesting affect in that the small crumbs of rubber became scattered on the floor around the work. It was a bit dirty and messy, not a pristine installation, and the rubber crumb could be felt underfoot, causing viewers to take note of what it was they were walking on.

Like the parking curbs and jersey barrier inflatables, this piece is not fully resolved but has led me to some interesting experiments. Could I print this on clear film like *fence line*? Would the ability to view one image through the other further the idea of situating the viewer within the space? Does the rubber 'asphalt' add to the experience of the photographs? Could the parking curbs exist in this context as only rubber crumb rather that an identifiable object? I would like to continue to experiment more with the ways in which I can manipulate the images to imply an actual space.

MUSINGS ON: ***between permanence and impermanence***

While contemplating the landscape of my childhood, one thing that I have avoided representing is the house in which my grandparents lived. Looking back on the work, I found it quite interesting that I focused on the periphery from the vantage point of the home, but not the home itself. Like the landscape, the house itself will undergo a huge transformation; in being demolished it will cease to exist. Artists have been working with structures that have been slated for demolition for many years. Gordon Matta-Clark worked on a variety of demolition sites: both *Splitting* (1974) and *Conical Intersect* (1975) resulted from this process.

Figure 15. Rachel Whiteread, *House*, 1993.

More recently Racheal Whiteread created *House* (1993) using her single casting method in which the form (mold) she casts into is destroyed in the process. Her mold in this instance was a Victorian row house slated to be demolished in order to make way for the construction of apartment tower blocks. In this piece it was the walls, roof and all the various parts of the original house that were sacrificed and torn from the structure once the concrete had cured, displaying the private space of the home's interior within the public realm. *House* itself was torn down three months after it had been erected and, like the work of Matta-Clark, exists only in the documentation. James Lingwood aptly describes the unfolding of this work: "It began an idea without a name, in the quiet of Rachel Whiteread's studio in east London. And it ended several years later, a sculpture called *House*, demolished in the full glare of the world's media"[10].

[10] Lingwood, James, Rachel Whiteread and Jon Bird, House: Rachel Whiteread, (Phaidon Press in association with Artangel. London.1995) 7.

Works such as those of Matta-Clark and Whiteread are important to me in regard to ideas of dematerialization and in connection to my work when considering the cycle of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction that is taking place. Their works are temporal and ephemeral, in that a house is taken apart to create a work and then in turn the work itself is destroyed.

In thinking about my grandparents' home and its imminent destruction, I realized I wanted to work more directly with the idea of a home, a structural element situated on a given parcel of land. I wanted to create a piece to infer private and public space, using functional road construction materials: wooden surveyor's stakes. The stakes themselves function as a demarcation of space and are often used to identify property boundaries, run grade or indicate the direction of infrastructure through space.

Figure 16. Diana Chisholm, *between permanence and impermanence*, 2015

I decided to hang the stakes, lifting them off the floor as I'd done with the fence line panorama. At the interior of the work, the stakes are more condensed and inverted with the sharpened end pointing up, alluding to a spear or some sort of personal defence. Yet they are also formal and familiar, akin to picket fences used to bound properties in order to decorate or create privacy. In this piece, the stakes transition to pointing downwards as they move outwards from the interior, the way they would typically be used, although here they are suspended. The stakes

become less congested as you move to the exterior of the rectangular formation. Viewers are able to walk amongst the edges of the piece and enter into its space until it becomes too dense to allow them to pass to the interior of the work and access the private space at the core.

Figure 17. Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter (An Exploded View)*, 1991.

By making use of the lighting within the exhibition space, I am able to project the shadows created by the work onto the floor and wall creating a ghost-like picket fence that can be seen but not touched, viewed but not crossed. These intangible elements of light and shadow which can activate the whole gallery space are reminiscent of Cornelia Parker's *Cold Dark Matter (An Exploded View)* (1991). In this piece Parker took a garden shed filled with various objects such as bikes and tools and enlisted the help of the British army to blast the shed to pieces. She then installed the remains of the shed in a gallery surrounding a single bare bulb. From a material perspective my installation and Parker's are quite different, in that I made the decision to emphasize the formal quality of the stake whereas Parker has completely transformed the objects by blasting them. Parker has used light to recreate the blast with the shadows cast on the gallery walls whereas I am trying to use light to imply something that was never there.

CONCLUSION

As the above Musings and Side Notes describe, my exploration of the way in which a variety of spaces are delineated and my consideration of the physical or metaphorical boundaries we erect around those spaces, has allowed my work to change over the two-year period of the MFA program. By focusing on aspects of the everyday and giving myself permission to be more experimental and freer in my studio, I have opened up a range of new possibilities and directions

for my work. This transition began by removing the work from the confines of the casting process. Rather than forcing an idea to appear via casting, I began to choose materials and processes suited to my ideas.

By transitioning to materials that are less precious (such as construction materials), experimentation and chance occurrences began to happen alongside a degree of preparation and planning. This has resulted in works that progress through process and material choices. In turn, my work has become much lighter in its materiality and has lifted off the ground. This, paired with introducing light as a prominent material in my installations, has pushed the work beyond formal aspects and allowed it to become more ephemeral.

I responded to the focus on ‘dematerialization’in works by contemporary artists which, in some cases, included works that dissipated over time, or that were torn down and demolished, existing solely through photographic images that documented evidence of their existence. My consideration of a place I am familiar with but where I no longer live (the family farm in Nova Scotia) hints of a more nomadic existence and allows aspects of time to enter into the discussion surrounding the work. This seems to show that the only space you can truly claim is your own personal space: a space you carry with you. It is up to each person to determine how to demarcate their own individual space; how much you let people in or keep them out.

My installations are now continually changing, much like the continual flux between the tangible and the intangible I’ve been contemplating in relation to boundaries. This is true of not only the way in which the work is made but also of the manner in which it is installed. By shifting the materiality of the work but maintaining aspects of the casting process, such as repetition and using multiples that come together to form a whole, I allow the work to be reconfigured to suit a variety of exhibition spaces. I've learned that things being "not quite right" can lead me in exciting and challenging new directions.

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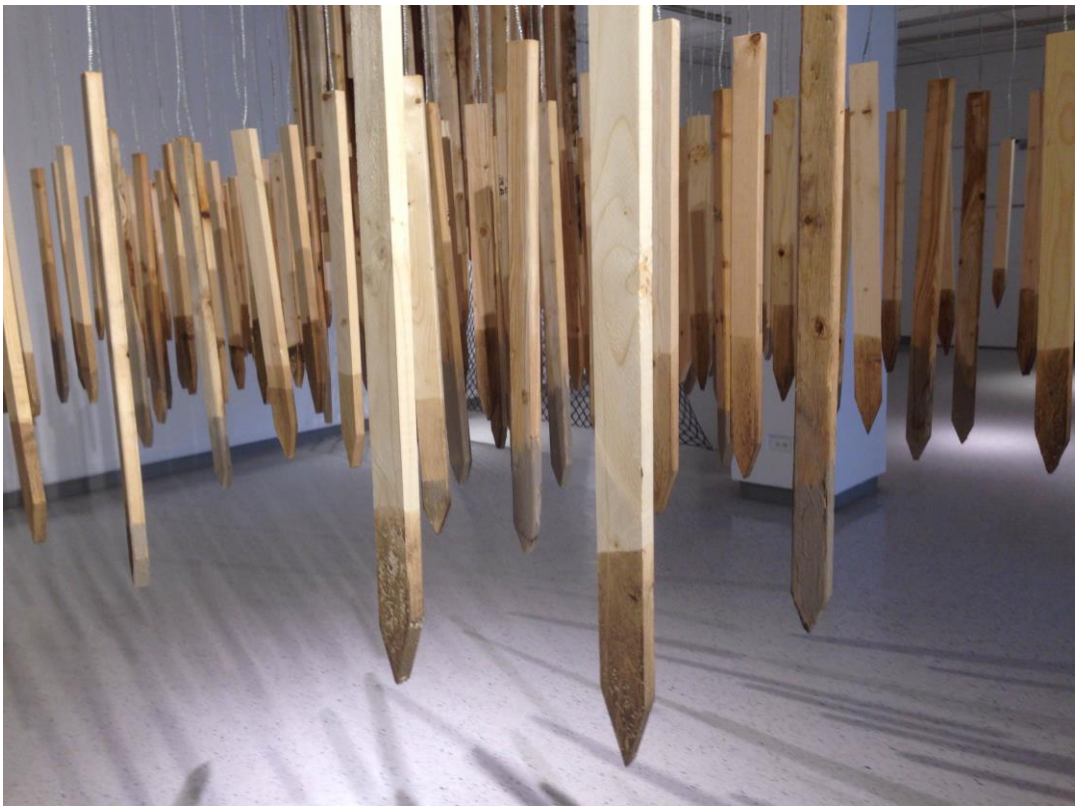
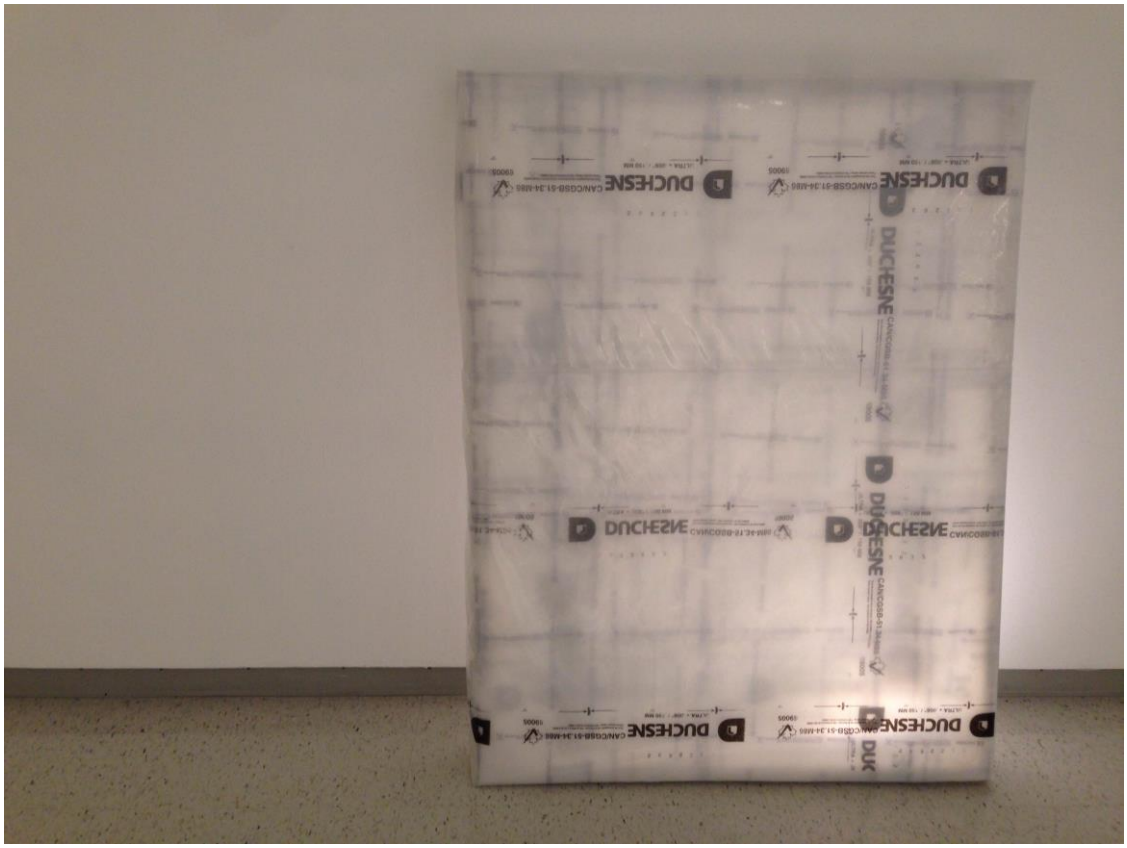
EXHIBITION INSTALLATION IMAGES

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